342 stick them into the earth in a sloppy circle, tie the ends together with any old thing, place a little straw on top and there they have a house with the appearance of an upturned funnel. And in there do
342 these privileged beings live, with more peace and tranquility than
513 kings in their sumptuous palaces; there do they build their fires and eat; there do the men and women sleep, with their parents, grandparents, children and grandchildren, and always in the company of a few dogs, on the bare ground or on a piece of reed matting, or on the skin of some wild pig they have killed, or cow they have stolen, all together in a jumble—this one with his head on his neighbor's chest, that one with his legs on some other's chest and the dogs on top of anyone who strikes them as comfortable. In this way their miserable
● 361 hovels soon swarm with insects and then they set fire to them and build others somewhere else—so they are forever moving into [602] new houses because those they construct are only makeshift. Furthermore they tend not to live in the same hut for long because of their habits of spending seasons now in one place now in another, according to the weather and time of year as for example: during the season of good fishing they spend weeks and months shifting continually from one section of the river to another, from the river to some stream, from the stream to some lake; in the fruit season they do the same thing."

"And so, as they are little inclined to bathing and always go
515 about dirty, and sleep piled up on each other together with their dogs,
164 they are almost always full of mange, a disease which even kills many infants. Many of them, if it should fall that they take a bath, take pleasure, while still wet, in rolling about on the river sand or in the ashes which are in their huts, as do certain animals which seem to require filth. On certain days and in certain seasons they blacken
302 their chests and faces with charcoal in order to appear more handsome or to show that they are celebrating some occasion."

"All of them cut their hair with a knife or with the teeth of fish, this for lack of scissors, which implement would have only a
[304] limited utility among them anyway. They also customarily pierce their ears, in order to insert a piece of stick or something as a fine ornament. The men pluck out with their nails the few hairs which grow on their faces, and some also pull out their eyelashes and eyebrows."

"Both men and women dress very simply, that is, they tie to
291 their waists a piece of any old thing, such as a piece of hide or cloth

skin color, and also because of the scratches which become caked, and 515
because of the sun's burning which wrinkles the almost scorched skin, especially on their shoulders; and finally because they go about barefoot and naked in the mud, through the underbrush and bushes, and as they lie down on the bare earth it is only natural that they should be covered with dust, just as we, who wash a thousand times a day do a thousand times become dirty again. They are not -- pardon the expression -- grubby, and I firmly contend that they are not dirty by nature.

An Indian camp is composed of an undetermined number of 342 [361]
dwellings, made by sticking branches into the ground and tying them together on top in the form of a cupola. Onto this frame they throw quantities of straw until it looks like, not a hut, but a wagon so loaded with hay as to cover the very wheels.

They hurl the straw from quite some distance and yet so accurately as to cause wonder, so much the more as it is the women who do this work. A hut, once finished, is so strongly constructed that a man can stand and move about upon it, and it is quite waterproof.

[177] Each chief has his own group of huts, like so many barracks, [622]
and sometimes, especially on the occasion of a declaration of war, many chiefs gather.

The huts are usually so low-ceilinged that one cannot stand up inside, but they vary as to length according to the rank of the family and the number of families which live in them. The long huts are somewhat humped, with two or more doors. The entrance ways are usually protected, on the windy side of the hut, by a fixed windbreak -- one must stoop in order to be able to enter.

A hut is divided into the following parts: the kitchens and the sections where sleeping, sitting, working etc. is carried on; however, there is no material separation between these parts.

The kitchen is nothing more than a swept space on which a fire [351]
is lighted, but only when the weather is cold or when the family mother [715]
is in mourning, during which time she does not leave the hut for a year, or allow herself to be seen, nor does she speak except when strictly necessary. The usual thing is to cook food outside near the entrance. There are as many kitchens as there are families.

The bedroom consists of that portion of the hut where they 352
place skins and clothes, if they have any, upon which they lie and which they put on when they go out if it is cold. On the walls at the

head and at the foot of their rustic bed they hang their possessions, 352
such as their bags, nets, etc., and some of their weapons. They sometimes stick four forked sticks into the ground, to a height of about a hand breadth above the surface, at the four corners of the bed, place two poles crosswise upon them and upon these, lengthwise, the necessary number of slats to make a sort of bedspring on which to spread skins and blankets. This type of bed is used particularly in the summer time in order to be cooler and to be free of insects and poisonous reptiles. The whites also customarily do the same thing, but they elevate their beds to a height of one or two meters above the ground to escape from tigers [jaguars--Translator]. I have slept on all of these types of beds and give my assurance that it is all a matter of habit -- nevertheless one can sleep much more comfortably on the ground. When the Indians break camp they burn all their huts.

In Mataco, "hut" or "house" is said in two ways: "hauet" and 196
"hepp" ("h" as in the German "haus" or "c" in "Florence"). Now "hepp" also means "smoke," "steam," "mist" and a kind of plant which looks like mist at a distance; "hepp" is also the name of steamship. And now, begging the reader's indulgence, is not the analogy perfect between this Mataco idiom and ours: calling the family or house "home" and a steamship "steam"? This is one more mental approximation between the Mataco man and the Aryan man.

The spear is stood upright at the entrance to the house, and to 411
one side are the bow and arrows, which lend a certain warlike appearance which [178] is pleasing. The houses are not constructed 361
symmetrically, but nevertheless an attempt is made to leave, between each row of huts, a wide street-like space.

It is a pleasure to see their fires when they are cooking. On the 252
very top are earthenware pots which contain various roots and wild 262
fruits, which usually need several changes of water. Among these there is a type of bean which is both good and palatable, and a root which is between a sweet potato and an Irish potato. The pots are 323
made and fire-hardened by the Indian women, who work them with care.

When the time for eating arrives, which, in the camp, is usu- 264
ally at eleven A.M. and at nightfall, fish on spits are brought out [252]
and crackle and hiss and smoke and drip in a way to make one's mouth water. On occasion a piece of meat from some animal will grace the 262

137

used industrially, the yuchan and the cháguar (which has fiber serviceable in making rope) [192] as they are to be found over an enormous territory and grow without need of cultivation, would be of great commercial value.

Another interesting tree that has domestic use and may some day be employed industrially is the pacara (Enterolobium timboiva). It is a tree of great beauty, very tall, of large girth and having a great deal of foliage -- it is of the mimosa family. Its fruit is a flat, oblong, twisted pod of a dark chestnut color about an inch and a half long and which contains 12 percent to 15 percent of saponin. This pod is used [388] to get the grease out of clothes and wool.

To finish as we had started, I must add that the Indians are great 273 lovers of the alcoholic beverages common among the whites, and become so drunk as to be floored. Even in this detail are they like those who are not their brothers in Christ.

Chapter VII

Wars

The Indians are much addicted to wars, it must be confessed, 721 and they are perpetually fighting; it is -- if I may be allowed the expression -- a continual giving and taking.

One war follows another, either because the vanquished wish to avenge their previous losses or because the victors have begun to enjoy their victories. Causes for war are: having fished, hunted or harvested in foreign territory, or the need to annul an offence or the hope of gain.

These wars are not strategic ones in which one battle follows another until the enemy is helpless to defend himself; rather are they surprise attacks on camps with the object of overwhelming and pillaging them and carrying off cattle, boys and sometimes even women.

This is why the camps or villages, in forested regions, always 361 ● have flanks and back right up against the deep woods, where, if surprised, the inhabitants may find refuge, and where it would be impossible to pursue them as there is a veritable labyrinth of paths known only to the inhabitants of the village.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

114 The way which leads from Embarcación up to Bolivia is what is called a *camino carretero*, a broad road suitable for big carts drawn by mules. It is illustrative of the primitive means of communication in Bolivia that nearly all articles of commerce had to be transported along this road up to such distant places as Santa Cruz de la Sierra and Mojos in the heart of Bolivia — a journey which takes months to accomplish. My own nearest goal was a place called Yacuiba, a big village which at that time belonged to Bolivia, but a few years later on was annexed by Argentine. The journey from Embarcación to Yacuiba takes seven days. Embarcación is situated on the bank of the Rio Bermejo, a tributary of the Pilcomayo, and this river had to be crossed, the mules swimming over it. Having a few hours later passed the small village Miraflores, we arrived at the open plains varied with small forests which here form the westernmost part of the enormous territory of the Gran Chaco. These regions are almost uninhabited; only isolated *tolderias* (villages) of the Mataco Indians are found, from which occasionally we could hear the beating of drums or the incantations of the medicine-men, when they were trying to call forth rain or to drive away evil disease-bringing spirits. The scarcity of water in fact was great, for although it was the beginning of the rainy season, very little rain had as yet fallen, and at the halting-places it was generally difficult to find water for the beasts. In a place called Bomba, inhabited by a lonely settler, we had to pay for the drinking-water, which was brought from a distant pool near the cordilleras rising in the west.

114 361

About midway between Embarcación and Yacuiba lies the village Tartagal, which at that time only consisted of a couple of poor houses. In this region nature entirely changes its aspect. The traveller, having previously marched for days through open plains and thickets, suddenly enters a virgin forest of almost tropical grandeur, where the great variety of climbers and creepers, covering not only the giant trees but also bushes and plants, especially attracts attention. This is a type of scenery which is only met with in the vicinity of the Andes, never in the interior of the Chaco. We had to march a couple of days through this interesting primeval forest before we again came out on the plains. Just north of Tartagal there is the small village Aguaray — like all villages in this region, rather a group of primitive ranches — whence it is only one day's journey to Yacuiba.

114 133

Yacuiba was formerly a place of bad repute, being a resort of criminals and adventurers of the kind so frequently met with in places far away from the centres of civilization in Argentine and Bolivia. At the

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

M 342 against rain and wind. In these huts the Chaco Indian spends most of his time, sitting or lying on the ground or on the goat or sheep skin which forms his most important personal property. In the daytime, however, if the weather is fine, he prefers to stay outside the house engaged in various occupations or in eating or drinking, and in the summer time when no rain is falling and the temperature is high, he frequently even passes the night in the open air.

M T 342 177 Whereas primitive huts of this type are still customary among the Pilagá and other Argentine Tobas as well as among distant Mataco tribes, the Mataco and Tobas on the Bolivian side nowadays make houses of the same form as the whites, constructed of beams or balks with walls of cane and roofs of twigs and grass. Still these houses are so badly built that it is no rare thing to see a passing whirlwind sweep off the roofs and damage the walls.

C ●M ●361 A Choroti or a Mataco village consists of six to twelve huts, generally arranged in a circle round an open space which serves as a field for games and as a tethering place for the small flocks of sheep and goats possessed by the Indians. In the middle of this space there is usually a shady algaroba tree under which the men of the village assemble for deliberations and where the drinking-bouts take place. In building their settlements the Indians first of all make sure of the existence of water in the neighbourhood, be it the river Pilcomayo itself or one of those insignificant pools which are found here and there in the interior of the Chaco; secondly, the place must offer the necessary pasture for their flocks; and thirdly, the Indians always settle in the vicinity of a forest where they can find plenty of the wild fruits on which they to a great extent subsist, and the trees of which offer some protection against the burning rays of the sun during the hottest hours of the day. Further, being anti-social and shy, the Indians preferably chose for their settlements a place hidden away from the main track. Seldom or never are they found close to the banks of a river: generally one has to travel one or a few miles into the interior to find their villages.

C M T 361 The villages of the Tobas and the Ashluslay are generally larger than those of the Choroti and the Mataco because the tribes are larger, but they are arranged on the same principles. All Chaco tribes live in village communities — this is a feature which differentiates these tribes from those of the tropical virgin forests. The vast pampas regions, of course, favour the rise of larger societies, whereas in the great virgin forests the different families necessarily live scattered.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

361 181 In Chaco, both the primitive methods of constructing the houses and the peculiar character of the social life must to a great deal be explained by the fact that the Chaco Indians are nomads, unable to remain long in any one place and driven by resistless forces from one part of the country to another. Both their enemies, partly other Indian tribes, partly men of an altogether different race, and nature itself have always compelled them to live a nomadic life. It is a well known fact that the interior of the Chaco has for many centuries been a place of refuge for savage tribes driven to these inhospitable regions against their own will, under the pressure of superior forces. Still more do natural conditions force the Indians to wander: vast inundations at certain seasons, complete lack of water at others, and a variety of considerations arising from the necessity of obtaining a livelihood. When pasture or game is getting scarce in one place, the Indans change their abode and move to another place where it is easier to feed their flocks and to eke out their store of food by hunting. Agriculture, although practised to a very limited extent, may also at times compel the Chaco Indians to seek new dwelling-places. But — as Mr. Grubb rightly observes with special reference to the Lenguas of Paraguay — the Chaco Indian is often driven to forsake home and friends merely by his restless spirit, »the result of generations of hard and peculiar circumstances fixing a habit upon him which becomes second nature». The mere desire to wander and to get a change, or perhaps to see relatives and friends living in another part of the country, may induce an Indian to abandon his house and to move away with his wife and children and his whole property. Superstition works in the same direction. When a death occurs in a house, that house is as a general rule destroyed and burnt, and if an epidemic causes several deaths within a short time, the whole village is destroyed and thereafter abandoned by its inhabitants. The Indians cannot persuade themselves to continue living in a place which is evidently haunted by evil spirits.

361 648 Distant savage Chaco tribes have been in the habit of abandoning and destroying their villages after they have been visited by white men. In some cases the Indians, as soon as they have got to know through their spies that a party of white men are approaching, have burnt their villages and retired to the interior, unexplored parts of the country. Both Nordenskiöld and other travellers have noted with astonishment this custom of the Chaco tribes. Its true motives are to be sought partly in a natural fear of the whites, of whom the Indians have frequently had sad experience, but above all in superstitious dread of the mysterious disease-spirits

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

which the strangers are believed to bring with them. The whole place, according to the idea of the Indians, has become infected as it were by the new-comers. Besides, the Indians understand that one party of white men is soon followed by another.

It is natural that the Chaco Indians should not care to bestow great labour on dwellings which in all probability will house them only for a short time, or in general, to arrange their life more comfortably in a place which they will probably soon be obliged to desert for ever. Apart from this, the Chaco Indian, who is perfectly suited to his environment, constructs his houses precisely in the way he thinks is most practical and of the material which is most easily obtainable. In the interior parts of the Chaco there are no large trees affording material for the construction of more substantial and durable houses. On the other hand, the scraggy trees and bushes in which the Chaco forests abound and the grassy plains provide building material in abundance, always within reach and excellent for the needs of the Indians. The beehive shaped huts of the primitive Chaco tribes therefore do not, as a certain ethnological school asserts, represent a type of human dwelling essentially characteristic of tribes at the lowest stages of cultural development, but must be wholly explained by the natural conditions. Like the Fuegians, who in their general culture are closely related to the Chaco tribes, the latter are not, on the whole, any lower in the scale of human development than most other tribes in tropical or sub-tropical South America, although nature may allow these to construct habitations of a higher type.

The same reasoning evidently accounts for the fact that the Pilcomayo tribes, although they are dependent on the river and to a great extent subsist by fishing, do not use canoes or craft of any kind. Whereas »dug-outs» of the kind customary among the South American Indians are commonly used by the Lenguas and other tribes of the river Paraguay, the Choroti, Mataco, Tobas, and Ashluslay have not even thought of constructing such vessels, obviously because the large timber trees from which canoes could be dug out are not obtainable in their country.

I have mentioned that agriculture is only practised by the Chaco tribes on a very limited scale, which of course is due to the dryness of the climate. Among all tribes the land is common property, and within this territory each family has a small plot of land allotted to it, or once taken possession of, which they are supposed to possess as long as they actually cultivate it. Pumpkin, *santia* (water melon), and beans are the principal crops of the Choroti; maize and manioc are also cultivated, but the drought

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 S17 Mataco S17

Mataco Marriage

By Niels Fock

This paper was written on a field trip to the Mataco, carried out under the auspices of the Fundación Williams, Argentina with support from the Danish State Research Foundation. I wish to express my hearty thanks to these institutions, and particular thanks to my professor, Dr. Kaj Birket-Smith, who has supported the expedition both scientifically and morally.

The Mataco Indians inhabit the western areas of the Argentine Chaco between the Rio Pilcomayo and the Rio Bermejo. They have for centuries been in contact with civilisation, but as a frontier tribe they seem to have built up a special traditionalism as a protective bulwark. Particularly the north-eastern Mataco at the central Pilcomayo have preserved their ancient traditions to this day, and the occupational system is still stamped by the collecting by women and the fishing of the men. The customs in connexion with marriage have to a large extent been retained unaffected to the present day, evincing many primitive features as, for example, the lack of any form of wedding ceremony. The contraction of marriage extends over a period dating from the girl's initiation until her first confinement.

The Mataco regard the initiation of girls as an introduction to marriage. This initiation consists in the girl's seclusion—or better—segregation from everyone apart from her mother. It comes as a prolongation of her first menstruation, and the long isolation is spent in continual work making *caraguatá* cord. It is considered very important that this work should be performed rapidly and well in order that an impression can be formed of the girl's ability as regards her main occupation in the future. As a rule the end of seclusion is marked by an *alaje* festival during which the girl looks around for a man. That same night she is able to take him with her to her home and allow him to sleep with her.

The girl being initiated is then called *asutshe;* sexually and economically she is now ready for marriage. Normally several years will pass during which the girl may well search for a husband, but the actual result of her efforts is a series of sexual relations that seldom endure beyond a few days. It is nearly always the girl who takes the initiative for these short term adventures. At the village dancing-place where every evening the young men dance in chains or rings, the girls also

Ashluslay SK5
Mataco SI7
Choroti SK6
Tapiete SK13

/1 cont./

000 the Sociedad Cientifica del Paraguay. Having also visited
C the Churupí Indians at the mission near Lake Escalante, about
A 25 kilometers from the mission at Esteros, I continued my
M journey on September 5 as far as Linares, where I found a num-
114 ber of Mataco Indians, who in part lived in a town some seven
M kilometers from Linares and in part had come from the other
[361] side of the Pilcomayo River to Linares.

/2/ On September 9 I left Linares and on the next day
C arrived in Guachalla, from where I visited the Churupí camp
A /tolderia/ about seven kilometers away.
114
[361]

On September 11 I left Guachalla for the fort of Cururenda,
C where I had the occasion to see the Chorote /Choroti/ Indians,
CI who were living in a camp some three kilometers from
114 Cururenda, as well as some Toba and Mataco, who came
CI from the other side of the Pilcomayo to Cururenda.
[361]

On September 15 I continued my journey as far as Oruro,
C in the environs of which I visited the Tapieté. My escort,
114 Lieutenant Cabello, who knew these Indians well, took me to
T their two camps, one of which is 15 and the other 32 kilo-
[361] meters from Oruro.

On September 19 I left Oruro, and passing through
C Capirendá and Carandayty, in the company of Lieutenant
114 Díego Corvalan, I arrived in Machareti, where I remained
from September 21-25. Since Machareti is a Chiriguano
town, I had a good chance at this place and at the end of my
journey, to observe this interesting Indian tribe.

Beginning my return on September 25, I passed in succes-
sion through Capirendá, Carandayty, López de Filippis, and
Puerto Casado, arriving in Asunción on October 8.

C
[122] Thanks to the great help of the military authorities, it was
possible for me to pass through large areas of the Paraguayan
Chaco during the relatively short time of two months, to get
acquainted with a large number of native tribes of the Chaco,
to take photographs of these tribes, and to make up vocabularies
000 of their different languages. Outside of the Toba, whom I met